

A Battle with the Hyndras.

About seven o'clock we reached an especially lively looking spot, a ravine between gigantic boulders, thickly covered with waving grass as high as a man, a lovely place for snakes to hide in during the heat of the day. Here we decided to make a start. That there were plenty of them about, although, as yet we had seen none, was soon proved by one of the Goorkhas, who threw a stone at the trunk of a large fig tree close by. The crash of the stone had hardly reached our ears, when instantly a black and yellow thing slid to the ground, looked around for a moment, and then, head up, with a horrible hissing, went like an arrow straight for the man. The plucky Goorkha, whirling off his jacket, held it in front of him and stood his ground, singing out to us not to shoot. We had all instinctively raised our guns. The Hyndra, blinded with passion, made a great spring, and struck the jacket with such force, that he actually dashed it right into the man's face, nearly knocking him over as well. The next moment his cane sang through the air, and there was one dead Hyndra.

This incident pleased us. It showed the excellent stuff the fellow was made of. We had a sandwich and a pull at our flasks, and then began to make our arrangements. My idea with the netting was to pitch it in a circle large enough to hold us all easily—stake it upright strongly; and then to fire some grass close by and retreat into the citadel. The brutes would be sure to go for us when the fire drove them out, and we would stand inside our ring fence, and kill them as they tried to climb it. The fence, by-the-by, was to have a barbed wire run along its top. Half an hour sufficed to prepare all this on a nice little piece of rising ground. Then, after collecting a lot of stones inside, and laying our guns out all handy, we fired the long grass in the ravine, and hastily retreated into our netting. I confess some tremors seized me as, cane in hand, we waited whilst the Goorkhas flung stones into the thickets and I listened for the crackling of the flames. But the ring fence made a splendid little fort—four feet high, staked with a strong upright every three feet, the bottom well pegged, and with a thick piece of heavily barbed wire run from stake to stake along the top.

But we hadn't long to think. As the flames rose and the smoke began to rise from the still dewy stuff, a great rustling was apparent amid the strangely waving reeds and grass. A horrible hissing filled the air with an indescribable noise. Then a heavy scent, not unlike valerian, became apparent, and the next minute dozens of wriggling, crawling, black and yellow bodies appeared, gleaming in the fierce sunshine—dozens of ferocious Hyndras! By Jove! we had routed them with a vengeance. We need not have bothered about the stone throwing to stir more up. I had never seen or dreamed of so many snakes together, and as I glanced at the compressed lips of my companions and then at the netting, the barrier looked horribly low. I confess that I again felt dubious as to the results of the adventure.

On they came. First one by one, then in threes, in bunches—in dozens. The leading ones caught sight of our little band. In a second up went their heads, and as they came, in a sort of ghastly howl, they uttered a low, muffled, unnering sight. They had about sixty yards of open ground to cross before reaching the netting, and this army of hissing, sinuous bodies was exposed to two volleys from our breech loaders, which strewed a score of them in maimed, writhing, knotted heaps; but this never stopped the main army in the least. Then there ensued a horrible scene. We began quietly enough, but as the lust of battle and slaughter seized upon us it all became to me a sort of chaos, of rattling reports, fierce yells and curses, smoke and heat, as the flames from the burning jungle were wafted by the wind towards us; and over all that overpowering scent of valerian. Forms of shouting men were seen dimly through the enveloping cloud striking at half invisible foes, as the fierce, distended jaws and quivering tongues of the horrible brutes came up above the netting; while the swish of the swinging canes, whistling through the air, was followed by a curious "thuck" as they hit the supple, firm, body of the snake.

At last, what with the heat from the burning jungle, our failing strength, and the apparently endless number of the brutes, who were beginning to surround us entirely, it was getting too warm to stay. We decided to slip out behind our netting and to cut and run to a hill a hundred yards off, which had a stony top and stood fairly high. I do not think I ever sprinted so fast before. Ensnared on the hill, we were able, whilst regaining breath, to watch what was happening below in our deserted fort. The brutes were still swarming at the netting, striking it with their heads, and throwing themselves on it with inconceivable fury. At last some actually got over. Three pigs burst out of the burning jungle, and, mad with terror, dashed through the swarming reptiles. We could see them being repeatedly bitten, as they dashed along. The first one ran about a hundred yards, luckily in an entirely opposite direction to us, before he dropped; the others only covered half the distance before they too went down. But it had apparently created a diversion, and off went the Hyndras on the line the pigs had taken. We opened fire, and, as our shot did tremendous execution, opening regular lanes amongst them; and we blazed away volley after volley until they got away. The crumbling ruins of an ancient hill fort stood near their way. Perhaps they thought their unseen enemies were concealed there; anyhow, they went at it like tigers. With fearful hisses, plainly audi-

ble to us, they swarmed like ants up its old walls. It was an un-canny sight; death, horrible, writhing, hideous—death in tangled knots of quivering black and yellow. One great brute would get half way up and then slip back, to be instantaneously bitten to death by his companions. It is a curious point about the Hyndra, that when inflamed with rage, they bite and kill each other as readily as the common enemy. A second or two of their awful poison does the business, and the survivors often devour the dead. By far the greater number killed this day were poisoned by each other. We waited and watched until there seemed but a few left moving. They had won the fort and killed most of themselves in the effort. Then we went to the netting, inside which were some dozen gleaming brutes trying vainly to get out. These we quickly despatched by the now red stained canes, and then we set to work to collect the dead and cut their heads off—no agreeable task, and one by no means free from danger, as some still had a little life left.

The Insane of Russia. In the last number of the Russian journal, *Arkhiu Psikiatrii*, appears an interesting article by Dr. Yakovenko, throwing much light upon the present state of Russian lunatic asylums, and comparing the provisions now made by the zemstvos for dealing with lunatics with the state of affairs before the days of zemstvos, says the London *Lancet*. Like so many other modern institutions and methods in Russia, the present system dates from the great epoch of reforms which included the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and the introduction of the system of local self-government by zemstvos in 1863. Before that period the care of the insane in Russia was in the hands of a governmental body known as the Prikaz, or ministry of social supervision (*Prikaz obshchestvennago priazrenia*). When the functions of this body passed over to the zemstvos, there was asylum accommodations in Russia for 1,167 patients; now the number has grown to 9,950. Formerly the annual sum expended on each patient was 90 rubles (about \$45), now it is 215 rubles (over \$105). Consequently the total annual cost of the asylum population of Russia is at the present time not far short of 2,000,000 rubles, instead of only a little over 100,000 as formerly.

Great improvements have also been introduced in the methods of treating the insane. Forty years ago there was still a tendency to regard lunatics almost in the light of criminals, and to treat them as criminals rather than as unfortunate victims of disease. All this has now been altered. The chains and ropes, cages and bars, handcuffs and strait-waistcoats, which were formerly found in every asylum in constant use, are now things of the past, and physical restraint is resorted to only in rare cases where it is absolutely necessary. In the treatment of the insane in Russia is now conducted on the same principles of science, common sense, and humanity as in other countries. But, writes Dr. Yakovenko, there is still a good deal to be done before the asylum accommodation in Russia can be regarded as adequate. He calculates that the number of insane persons in the governments under zemstvos rule is somewhere between 127,000 and 191,000. Consequently, at the present time only some 7 per cent. of the total number are now treated in asylums.

Comparing Russia in this respect with other countries, he finds that in France the proportion of insane under control in asylums to the total number of insane is 40 per cent.; in Switzerland, 58 per cent.; in America, 66 per cent., and in Scotland it is as high as 83 per cent. The immediate aim of the zemstvos, the article concludes, should be at least to provide accommodation for such cases as absolutely require asylum treatment, and as these may be reckoned at about 20 per cent. of the whole, it follows that the present number of available beds should be at least tripled.

A CAPE COD SAND STORM.—A sandstorm on Cape Cod, back of Provincetown is something more to be dreaded than a Western blizzard. When the wind blows in a gale from the northeast the soft, light sand drifts in immense clouds, completely obscuring all objects around farther than ten feet away. It is worse than snow in many respects. It not only covers up the road or trail in a short time, but it changes the general features of the landscape permanently. People get lost in the sand storms, and often, when the storm subsides, the landscape is so altered that they are bewildered and puzzled in trying to locate their homes. The sand may not be as freezing cold as the snow, but it is far more injurious. It cuts and grinds the face as it strikes it and performs about the same operation as a sand-blast. Men who have been lost out in the furious sand storms and members of the life saving patrol have returned home at night with their faces lacerated and discolored so that they resemble raw beef. Even the glass windows of the houses are so ground by the flying sand that they have to be replaced often by new ones. After one heavy storm it is almost impossible to see through the glass. People now shut the blinds of their houses facing the wind during the sand storms in order to save the glass.

Moscow has a foundling hospital large enough to hold 7,000 persons. It was founded in 1764, and at present takes in children at the rate of forty a day, or about 15,000 a year. There are about twenty-six physicians, and about 900 nurses. In the period 1764-1864 the number of children received was 468,560. Mothers desiring to take back their children can do so. On his retreat from Moscow in 1812 Napoleon gave special orders to spare this building.

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